



Rummage Theatre

Behind the Wallpaper

Hannah Soulsby-Phillips

First Performed 19th June 2014

Not to be reproduced or performed without express written permission from Rummage Theatre.

Behind the Wallpaper

Julie is sat talking to audience. She is attempting a confident air, but signs of her breakdown are visible.

JULIE: Hello, I'm Julie. I'm an editor of a large newspaper. We're very proud that we've gained a rather controversial reputation. We go out of our way to expose personal injustices suffered by the public. Don't worry, that's not what I'm doing here. *(pause)* I have a daughter. She must be 5 months old now. She changes so much every time I see her! She's called Eve. I wanted a good strong name, nothing too...cute. My sister's daughter is called Poppy. She'll hate that when she grows up. No one takes a woman seriously with a flower for a name. No offence if that applies to you. *(to someone-nervously)* I'm sorry; I'm not sure what I'm supposed to be saying...is this right? *(to audience)* Okay, well, I was always going to be a single mother. It wasn't planned, but I think I knew we weren't compatible from the start. But he still has a hand in the parenting, it was an amicable split. *(to someone)* This is boring, surely? Who wants to hear this stuff?...Talk about whatever I want...*(standing)* I don't really want to talk about any of it! I'm a good mother! I'm not a teenager, I *wanted* a child!

Lighting snap to present day. OLIVIA enters. During this scene, OLIVIA is doing lots of 'business' tidying away baby stuff etc.

JULIE: You are a life-saver Livvy! Auntie Liv's bought your nappies! I completely forgot them when I went shopping. I mean, who forgets nappies?!

OLIVIA: A busy new mum. Don't beat yourself up, we've all done it!

JULIE: I can't imagine you ever did. I always remember your babies being fully clothed.

OLIVIA: Yeah well, that's because I have a husband who was sent out in all weathers at least four times a day!

JULIE: I don't need a husband. I like it on my own.

OLIVIA: I know you do, I wasn't implying anything. Just don't expect to be perfect straight away...Don't expect to be perfect *ever!*

JULIE: I love having her; I'm just used to things going my way. I can't seem to get my head round the fact that my life's now ruled by someone else. That sounds awful, doesn't it? I sound so ungrateful!

OLIVIA: It gets easier, I promise. I wouldn't have done it three times otherwise.

JULIE: I couldn't stop crying all day yesterday. I just sobbed and sobbed! I think my eyes are still all puffy.

- OLIVIA:** Oh, that's just your hormones going wild. They'll settle down after a while. I remember feeding Poppy with tears streaming down my face, no idea why. Just make sure you get enough sleep; that really helps.
- JULIE:** *(looking at wall)* Do you know, I just can't adjust to this wallpaper. When I bought it, I thought it would be cheerful. But now it just looks...garish.
- OLIVIA:** It's fine. I must say, I'm surprised none of your minions have sent cards.
- JULIE:** Don't call them minions. They're my colleagues or employees or...
- OLIVIA:** *(smiling)*...devotees.
- JULIE:** *(smiling)* Can I help it if I'm an editorial mastermind?
- OLIVIA:** Oh, she's thrown up bless her.
- JULIE:** *(rushing to clean up)* She's just been fed. It's okay, super mum to the rescue! Ah, she's smiling at me!
- OLIVIA:** It's just wind.
- JULIE:** *(looking at cloth)* Is that normal?
- OLIVIA:** Of course it's normal. It's just milk. It happens for the first few weeks. Read the books I gave you!
- JULIE:** Who needs books when I've got you! I might just check my emails while you're here. *(gets out phone)*
- OLIVIA:** Maternity leave is a wonderful thing Jules, don't waste it!
- JULIE:** How would you know? You've never worked a day in your life.
- OLIVIA:** All I'm saying is, you work hard, enjoy some time just being a mum. It's so rewarding if you jump in with both feet and immerse yourself in motherhood.
- JULIE:** No emails. They've forgotten me already.
- OLIVIA:** They're giving you the space you need. Don't forget you'll need to wind her.
- JULIE:** I've done it already.
- OLIVIA:** Oh, while I remember, Archie did you a drawing. *(pulling a picture from her bag)* It's you playing football with him.
- JULIE:** *(looking at pic)* Christ, did I eat the football?!
- OLIVIA:** I think you're still pregnant there. At least, I hope you are.
- JULIE:** I love that boy! As brutally honest as an X Factor judge!

Rummage Theatre 2014 ©

OLIVIA: I know! Last week he told me the wrinkles around my eyes looked like spider's legs. I'm not even 30!

JULIE: *(laughing)* I can't wait for his first school report! *(sticking picture to wall)*

OLIVIA: Oh don't! I'm already having nightmares about it!

JULIE: *(looking at wall)* I might redo this wallpaper when my body stops feeling like a tank drove over it. The pattern doesn't line up properly.

OLIVIA: It's fine. You've only just decorated.

JULIE: Yeah, I know. *(turning back)* Haven't you got to pick the kids up from school?

OLIVIA: Oh bugger! Alex will be crying to the Lollypop lady again. 'Mummy's so mean; she never picks us up on time!' And I'll have to suffer that old cow's judgemental face every time we cross the road until the end of term.

JULIE: Oh yes, motherhood's a delight!

OLIVIA: Now, are you sure you're going to be okay on your own? I could pick the kids up and come straight back.

JULIE: Livvy I'm not an injured bird, I'm a grown woman who runs a newspaper. I'm used to responsibility. I can handle a baby.

OLIVIA: I'm going to have to go or the headmistress will be phoning *again*. Call me any time if you need a hand.

JULIE: Thanks Livvy. *(there is movement behind the wallpaper)* Did you see that?

OLIVIA: What?

JULIE: A shadow...on the wallpaper.

OLIVIA: Probably something outside the window. See you later! *(exit)*

JULIE goes to wallpaper and inspects it but finds nothing out of the ordinary. She goes and sits back on her chair.